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THE SOCIAL DISEASE
AND HOW TO FIGHT IT

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A REJOINDER

BY

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"LIFE AND LETTERS OF MANDELL CREIGHTON, D.D."
ETC. ETC.

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PREFACE

DURING the last year, first the White Slave Traffic and now the Venereal Diseases have assumed a prominence in general talk and in the public press which would have seemed impossible a few years ago. A serious attempt has been made to grapple with the evils of the White Slave Traffic; we look forward to a serious attempt to check the ravages of the Venereal Diseases when the Royal Commission now sitting shall have concluded its labours and presented its report. It is important that the public mind should be prepared for a wise consideration of the whole subject, so that it may be ready to take up in an understanding spirit the great task that lies before it. It is to assist in the creation of this spirit that this

little book has been written, in the hope that women at least may be led to think wisely and widely on the whole subject. To many of them it is quite a new subject, and they are likely to approach it stirred with pity and indignation, quick to form judgments and make suggestions. It is well to realise from the first that the whole subject is full of unexpected difficulties and perplexities, such as make a clear vision hard to attain. We must come to its consideration ready to learn, keen to understand, with a firm hold on principles if we wish to help. We need at every step to pray for that spirit which alone can give us a right judgment in all things.

This little book does not profess to reach any final conclusions. If it should lead a few here and there to think and set themselves to learn, and then go on to help, my object in writing it will have been abundantly attained. For the help of all is needed, and this can be given in many directions,

under many circumstances and through all the various activities in which we are engaged.

I venture to hope that what is said here may avail to make some of those who have been roused for the first time to think about this matter take a wide view of the whole subject, and feel its complexity, and their own responsibility for wise and sober thinking and calm judgment on the serious problems involved.

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THE SOCIAL DISEASE

CHAPTER I

THE CALL TO FACE FACTS

FOR some time women have felt that not only for the sake of their unfortunate sisters, condemned to a life of shame, but for the purity of their own homes it was necessary that there should be an end to the conspiracy of silence, that they were bound to face the facts of life. With the progress of the women's movement this conviction has rapidly gained increasing force, and the demand for a purer social life has become an integral part of the movement. But while most are convinced that there should be an end to the conspiracy of silence, it is not quite so clear what should take its place. At public and private meetings and discussions, in publications of all kinds, especially

in a little book recently issued by Miss C. Pankhurst, subjects are discussed with a fullness and a frankness which would have been thought shocking by the last generation. The idea seems to be that everybody should know everything and talk about everything at all times and under all circumstances.

I am convinced that women are bound to know more, that they cannot consent to remain in ignorance any longer. They must recognise their responsibility in promoting social purity, in fighting against the harm which results from a low standard of morals. The danger at the present moment is lest their awakening to a sense of their responsibility, their realisation of the terrible evils that prevail, should lead to a spirit of antagonism against men, whose weakness and wrongdoing is so clearly the cause of the degradation of numberless women, and of the suffering and disease which follows. There is no doubt that this is primarily a problem for men to face. These evils would be remedied at once if there were a higher moral standard amongst men, and that double standard which exacts purity for women and condones incon-

tinence in men were abolished. But if women are to help at the present moment they must seriously endeavour to understand the position from the man's point of view. They must not ignore the fact that chastity is more difficult for men than for women, not only because their natural passions are stronger and hence more difficult of control, but because of the heritage of the past, of the social and moral traditions which surround them and for which the whole of society is in its different degrees responsible. Women must not begin the struggle against venereal disease, a struggle which will in their minds be practically identical with the struggle for social purity, in a spirit of hostility to men. They must come forward to help them, in the conviction that victory over sin and disease can only be secured when men and women fight and work together.

The matters under consideration are of vital importance to the whole life of the nation. Therefore the way in which they are treated must also be of vital importance, and this especially in consideration of their peculiarly difficult character. The

first need is for knowledge; but as everyone cannot know everything here at once, selection is needed. Not only who shall know, but how much should each know and how much it is possible to know must be considered.

Knowledge with regard to the evils and the sores of our social conditions is of the utmost value and use when it can lead to action or can by producing sane and wise thinking influence conduct and public opinion. But it would be foolish to deny that there are dangers in the indiscriminate distribution of knowledge. For knowledge is dangerous when it leads to panic and hence to rash and ill-considered action to avert the evils disclosed; it is dangerous when it leads to morbid absorption in horrors, to rash judgments, to a loss of the sense of proportion, to want of charity.

We have awakened to the recognition of a great evil. Women are beginning to understand what the double standard of morals means. Men are being forced to face the fact that it leads not only to the ruin and degradation of vast numbers of girls and women, but to widespread and

terrible disease. Ignorance, blindness, and weak acceptance of sin as a necessity have long prevented us from facing this evil, but it can be ignored no longer. It affects society as a whole, it affects the position of women, it affects the relationship between men and women, it affects the very future of the race itself. Small wonder that women as they awake to knowledge feel that this is a matter which concerns them vitally, that they are impatient to deal with it, that they wish to drag it into light in order that all may realise what it means.

But it is just because of the immense importance of this matter to all that we must beware of rash and hasty action. We must recognise the great difficulty of this question; we must realise that true and sound and accurate knowledge is not easily reached. Those doctors who knew most about the far-reaching danger of the venereal diseases asked for a Royal Commission to inquire into the whole matter. They desired all the knowledge that could be gained. The Commission after long and careful inquiry will put the public into the

possession of the facts that can be known. Then must come the beginning of a new fight, a fight in which all must share, against these evils which are destroying our moral and physical health. But all are not called upon to take the same part in this fight. What we have to discover is how each of us can help best ; and a true understanding of the subject may make us ready to believe that the knowledge which is necessary for some may be a hindrance to others. The facts must be faced, but they must be faced in a wise and sober spirit which will enable us to understand their true bearing. On the spirit in which we face an evil that we are determined to fight must largely depend the possibility of real success in the fight. In this matter, just because it concerns both men and women so intimately, men and women must fight together. It is not a question of one against the other ; both must fight for the common good against a state of things which, because it is disastrous for society as a whole, is equally disastrous for men and women, and the responsibility for getting rid of it must rest upon both.

CHAPTER II

THE CAUSES WHICH HAVE LED TO THIS AWAKENING

WHEN we go on to consider the causes which have led to this awakening to the recognition of the evil of the double standard of morals for men and women with all the horrors that result from it—prostitution, the white slave traffic, the devastating effects of the venereal diseases—it cannot be denied that the women's movement is the chief amongst them. But we shall lose the full significance of this fact if we isolate the women's movement and treat it as a thing by itself. We only see it in its true light when we recognise it as part of the great movement that has been going on all through the ages to free the world from the dominion of brute force and bring about the rule of the spirit. It is part of the great movement, the seeds of

which lay in the teaching of Christ and His Apostles, to bring freedom to all, that for each there might be full opportunity to develop all his powers and capacities for the service of all, for the highest good of the common life. Slowly as the Christian leaven worked has the social conscience been quickened. The growing interest in social conditions has led not only to more intimate acquaintance with the manner of life of the various social classes, but has also shown the way in which these classes intermingle and affect one another. We are learning to believe in the solidarity of society and to see what it involves, to perceive that the sores of one section of society mean peril for all. When brute force ruled supreme the strong and the powerful looked upon the weak and the helpless as existing for their use and pleasure. The evils which followed affected those who oppressed as much as those who were oppressed, if in different ways. We see now in our social conditions, in the attitude of the unreflecting rich to the poor, of the powerful to the weak, of men to women, in a thousand of the little social

conventions which rule our lives, the result of the rule of brute force. We see the way in which it has marred the beauty both of submission and of power till they sometimes look like vices rather than virtues. But all the time the liberating forces have been at work. We are beginning to insist that one man shall not be allowed to exploit his fellow men for the purposes of his own advance in wealth ; we are recognising the responsibilities of power, and all over the world it is being slowly realised that true progress is impossible if women are to be looked upon as existing solely for the pleasure and use of men. Society demands for its future growth and development the common work of men and women. Both have their own contribution to make. This contribution cannot be made so long as men enslaved by their own passions are willing to suffer the degradation of vast numbers of women as a tribute to their own weakness. Such a system means degradation not only for women but equally for men ; its inevitable consequence is the white slave traffic.

The women's movement has impelled

women to face these things. Formerly, even within very recent years, even now in many quarters, good women thought it right to ignore them. Men, most good men, wished to keep their women folk from the knowledge of the evil in the world. But this could not last when women began to think, when society began to realise what the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man meant. Then we knew that there could be no outcast women, that no one human being was of less value than another; then we recognised the infinite degradation that it meant to men to accept as inevitable the existence of the prostitute. It may be easy to speak lightly of the strength of temptation, of the impossibility of self-control, of the necessity for a young man to sow his wild oats; it cannot be easy to face lightly what all this involves, when we have once realised what the existence of the prostitute means, and what is the nature of the white slave traffic. Young men have not been made to face this, otherwise they would recoil from the consequences of their own weakness.

The progress of science has also contri-

buted powerfully to this awakening to a keener sense of our social evils. This progress has shown itself in increasing care for the national health, in the conviction that much which was hitherto endured as irremediable can be prevented, and that medical science is as much concerned with the prevention as with the cure of disease. As men of science have learned more of the terrible results of disease, they have turned with ever increasing zeal and industry to study its causes. Our hospitals have become not only or even mainly places where the sick are cured and tended—though there has been no failure in that side of their work—but places for the study of disease in order that its cause may be attacked. The smallest acquaintance with the patient work of research which has preceded the great medical discoveries of the last years must call forth the most sincere admiration. The great discoverer himself would be the first to own that he is only one amongst the hundred of obscure students and observers who have prepared the way for his final achievement. This too is fine service for the community. What has been discovered

in late years has made clear to us the ravages of the disease which we have to fight, and intensified the determination not only to remedy its consequences where possible, but to show clearly what is its cause and to attack the cause itself with determination, courage and patient hope.

CHAPTER III

THE EVIL TO BE FOUGHT

THERE can be no doubt about the terrible nature of the venereal diseases. It is certain also that the majority of people have been too content to be ignorant about them. To many the subject has seemed only shameful and painful; they have wished to ignore it entirely. This ignorance has proved to be so dangerous that it cannot be allowed to go on. But, on the other hand, in such a matter as this it is well that each should only know just so much as is useful to him. There is no need to know all the details of disease in order to avoid it, there is no need to dwell upon its horrors, still less to speak about them. The conspiracy of silence has done harm, but we must be careful now lest a loss of shame in speaking of shameful things, a needless tearing away of veils and abandonment of reticence, should do harm

case further treatment should be shown to be necessary, and till this period is passed he cannot marry without risk of infecting his wife and children. Infection which has led to such slight immediate results as sometimes to pass unobserved, and which has therefore not been properly treated, may in later life lead to some of the worst consequences of syphilis, such as general paralysis or locomotor ataxy. It is a terrible fact that by one act of sin, hardly recognised as a sin, treated perhaps as a joke, a man may bring upon himself, upon his future wife, upon his unborn children, untold misery and suffering.

Neither can it be ignored that these diseases are very widespread. Many terrible figures are given to show their extent and the number of their victims, but at present it would be well to remember that no certainty or possible accuracy can attach to any of these figures. There is no means in existence of arriving at the total number of those who suffer from venereal disease, and all statistics on the subject are most untrustworthy. Many efforts are being made to discover a means of getting exact

statistics, but it will be years before this is possible. At present in giving death certificates doctors avoid in most cases naming these shameful diseases should they be the cause of death, and still more if the cause of death is some other malady which has followed as a result of venereal disease or has been aggravated by it. They do this in order not to give pain to the sorrowing relatives. For the same reason the number of still births caused by venereal disease are not registered. But though exact figures are not to be had, there is abundant evidence of the widespread nature of these diseases, and that combined with the terrible nature of their results is enough to show the crying necessity for using the most drastic means to stamp them out. At the same time it is well to be careful to avoid exaggeration. Facts and figures which cannot be proved, which from the nature of the case can only be inferences and approximate guesses, should not be quoted as certainties. It would probably be wiser not to quote them at all. Panic is always dangerous. To rush from a state of ignorance to a state of panic will only

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bring about new risks. When overstatement has been proved to be exaggeration, people rush to the opposite extreme, and believe that because what they were first told was false, there is no need for alarm. Panic invariably leads to reaction. We have to recognise the seriousness and the danger of the evil, but if we are to fight it with success we must do so in a calm and sober spirit, yet with determination and courage.

It is of course impossible to fight these diseases as if they stood alone. They are part of a bigger evil, of the low moral tone in society generally and the consequent prevalence of a different moral standard for men and for women. It is this which has led to the existence of what is the source and origin of these diseases, the prostitute. Society has accepted prostitution as a necessity. To this day many will tell you that it has always existed, that it is useless to expect that it will ever cease to exist. The majority probably have never stopped to think what its existence means and involves. The young man who sins lightly because others do it, because someone suggests it, because he has drunk a little

too much, because no one has ever taught him the duty of self-control, never stops to think that the thoughtless act which he and so many like him commit means the degradation of women who in the eyes of God count for as much as his own sisters, means the existence of a shameful trade out of which men and women grow rich through the ruin of young girls in order to supply him with a passing gratification. He does not know, he does not think. What has society done, what has his own education and training done to help him to know and to think? Society has accepted, does accept, prostitution as necessary, and now the knowledge of the results of venereal disease has come to awaken us from our callousness towards this great social evil. We are constrained to feel that these diseases with their terrible results are a punishment for the callousness and indifference of society with regard to the evils of unchastity. The punishment falls on society as a whole, but it is a punishment which falls most unequally. The innocent suffer as well as the guilty; the little children, the innocent wife often more severely than the author of their suffer-

ing. The punishment falls most unequally too upon the men who sin. The boy who, misled perhaps by an older woman, herself the victim of the sin of other men, falls once into sin, may contract disease which will ruin him for life. The man of evil life, more experienced in the ways of the world, may know even whilst indulging in the most dissolute conduct how to avoid danger to himself. The punishment falls most unequally, but that very fact compels us to acknowledge the responsibility of society as a whole for the evil. It is society as a whole that is punished, it is society as a whole that must feel the responsibility not only to try to stamp out these diseases, but to go further and attack the evil which is their cause. Prostitution is their cause, because of the power of one prostitute to infect an unlimited number of men. It is in cities that these diseases are most common, and their prevalence increases with the size of the city. In villages and country districts there may be much immorality, but because of the absence of the prostitutes there is little if any disease, unless it is brought from the city.

CHAPTER IV

THE CAUSES OF PAST INDIFFERENCE

SOCIOLOGICAL study shows us that at all times and under a wide variety of conditions society has always been concerned with the relations between the sexes. The main object of most of the regulations controlling those relations was to maintain the integrity of the family and secure to a man legitimate descendants by enforcing purity of life upon at least some women. Man, anxious to keep some women for himself only, devised all kinds of restrictions upon their manner of life. Rules and restrictions did not always ensure purity of life even for the restricted women, and they entailed the existence of women given over to a life of vice, since no attempt was made to control the licence of men so long as they did not interfere with the wives of other men. Rules and restrictions could not create a pure society.

They were the result of the rule of brute force under which men regarded women as chattels. Christ came to bring freedom for all. But even the great Apostle who proclaimed the message of freedom to the world knew that it must come slowly in proportion as the Christian leaven penetrated the world. He urged the maintenance of certain restrictions whilst proclaiming the perfect law of liberty which in due time would do away with the necessity for restrictions. But from the first he asserted with no hesitation and with repeated insistence that the Christian was to flee fornication. Since then all through the ages the long struggle has gone on to fit men and women to live together in freedom and in purity, to bring about the rule of the spirit. Men and women alike have feared freedom, and in order to avoid fornication have sought the shelter of convents, have preached the ascetic life. The Church in the Middle Ages felt that the only way to secure chastity, devotion, and learning was to teach men and women to flee the world, to seek peace and safety in the bonds which they forged for themselves. Progress in living the life of liberty was

bound to be slow. Men have seldom sufficiently recognised the burden of liberty, the security of bondage. Many even to this day undervalue liberty. But the Christian knows that he is called to liberty, and in our day we are increasingly feeling that for the regeneration of society it is required that men and women should live and work together in a condition of perfect equality and absolute liberty, a law unto themselves.

This liberty, this equality, must be for all. Pure women can no longer be content to owe their purity, their sheltered homes, to the degradation of other women. The existence of the prostitute was considered necessary to make the pure home possible. Women as well as men have accepted her existence as a necessity. They were ashamed, afraid to know about her, but they felt that it was all right so long as they did not know, and good men as well as bad men were eager to keep women from this knowledge. It has been said with justice that if it is true that the prostitute must exist in order to preserve the purity of other women, then she should be given a highly honoured place as one who sacri-

fices her very self for the good of society. But good women ignored her, they refused to face the fact of her existence, they did not understand what it involved. Now we know, and we know that this thing cannot go on, that no social system can be healthy that rests on the degradation of some of its members. We know that prostitution is destructive to the physical health as well as to the moral purity of the community. We are convinced that it cannot be a necessity because we cannot believe that men are unable to learn and to practise self-control. But if this is our conviction, we must also recognise that women cannot fight this evil alone; it is a matter that concerns men as much as women; one sex cannot be degraded without the degradation of the other. The mistake of so much that has been said lately on this subject is that it has been treated as if it were a woman's question, a matter in which women had to fight as against men to maintain the rights of their sex. If women are condemned to degradation because of the unchastity of men, the same sin condemns men to degradation. Women must struggle

not only for the purity of women but for the purity of men, and in this struggle they have not got to fight against men but win more men to fight with them.

CHAPTER V

FIRST ATTEMPTS TO FIGHT THE EVIL

It is only comparatively lately during the last century that the great seriousness and the far-reaching results of the venereal diseases have been recognised. Gonorrhea seems always to have prevailed in Europe, but the history of syphilis is very obscure. No certain allusions to it have been found in classical literature, nor are traces of its effects to be noticed in the bones of skeletons belonging to early ages in Egypt. Its first severe outbreak in Europe took place in the fifteenth century, and many authorities believe that it was brought back from the New World by the followers of Columbus. Whether this be so or not, it has been well known in Europe since the fifteenth century, and from Europe it has been carried far and wide, to the wilds of Africa and the islands of the Pacific. In

the Far East it seems to have been known before its appearance in Europe.

Only about the middle of the nineteenth century did the progress of medical science lead men to perceive how disastrous were its effects, not only upon those who acquired it but upon their wives and children. Since then medical men have paid ever-increasing attention to it and scientific research has done much to elucidate its nature and the methods by which it can best be treated.

The discovery in 1879 of the gonococcus, the organism which causes gonorrhea, has enabled its presence to be found out by the microscope, and it has been demonstrated that after apparent cure the gonococcus may lie dormant for long, and be awakened into activity again by some predisposing cause, and still be capable of infecting a man's wife and children. The seriousness of syphilis and the difficulty, if not impossibility, of its cure was recognised much earlier.

It was of course soon perceived that prostitution was the main cause of the spread of the venereal diseases. One prostitute was in a position to infect an indefinite number of men, who in their turn

passed on disease to other women. Prostitution though acquiesced in has always been regarded as an evil. The prostitute who plies a trade which society regards as a necessity is treated as an outcast and a social disgrace. Men have ignored the undeniable fact that this wretched, degraded class, a source of moral and physical corruption to society, exists simply because they have been contented to assume that men cannot learn self-control, that for them chastity is impossible. Women have refused to think of what the life of the prostitute means. They too in the past, and very many of them still in the present, have accepted a double moral standard as a necessity.

The prostitute though reckoned a necessity was all the same treated as a source of disorder, a troublesome element in society, and from early times she was put under all sorts of repressive regulations. She was compelled to live either in special houses or in special parts of the town, and to conform to certain rules laid down as to the conditions under which she might carry on her trade. When the gravity of the venereal diseases was recognised, it was

supposed that by further supervision of the prostitute and by measures taken to secure her cure and freedom from disease, the spread of disease might be prevented. There grew up therefore the system which with many differences of detail is generally described as regulation. Its nature has varied considerably in the different countries in which it has prevailed, but speaking generally it means placing those who inscribe themselves as prostitutes or who are known to be prostitutes under the police, and insisting upon their submitting themselves regularly to medical inspection and upon their compulsory detention for treatment in accordance with the doctor's orders. Regulation has never existed in the United Kingdom as a universal system, but from 1866 to 1883 it prevailed in twelve districts in England and two in Ireland, these being districts where soldiers and sailors congregated. A long agitation started by Mrs. Josephine Butler, and carried on with the utmost heroism in face at first of cruel persecution and bitter opposition, finally led to the abolition in 1883 of the Acts which authorised this regulation. But for many

years after this, regulation in some of its worst forms continued in India, and though agitation at home has led to the abolition of the worst features of the system, something very like regulation still exists in the Indian cantonments.

In her campaign against regulation Mrs. Butler was primarily moved by her sense of the cruel degradation of women that it involved, and of the injustice and folly of a system which interfered with the woman only and left the man free to spread disease and ruin other women at his will. She and those who worked with her felt also the degradation involved in a system which recognised vice as a necessity for men, and which aimed only at making it safe. The safety that regulation professed to secure could only tend to make vice more common. At the same time even those who favoured regulation have been forced to recognise that it has absolutely failed in securing safety and in checking disease. This is chiefly for the reason that only those women can be inspected who are known to be prostitutes, whilst the vast number technically called clandestine prostitutes, who only take to

the life casually or side by side with other occupations, remain to spread the disease with which they have been infected by men. Some affirm that it is not regulation that has failed, but only the systems of regulation that have been tried, and that what is needed is a better and a stricter system so that none may escape. But it is clear that whatever system is tried in the future, the vast number of women who have come to see what regulation means for their unfortunate sisters will not suffer the existence of a system which does not apply equal treatment to men and women, and in this they may count upon the support of many men.

Dr. Bloch, the great German authority on the history of prostitution, gives it as his opinion that the underlying political and ethical notions that have determined the attitude of the modern world to the prostitute are essentially survivals from pre-Christian civilisation. Certainly any system of regulation which places the prostitute under a special police, which controls her actions and compels her to submit to treatment whilst allowing the men with whom she consorts to go free, can only be regarded

as a form of slavery. As such it must be opposed to the ideals not only of a Christian but of a democratic State. As such it must in these days be doomed to failure. The whole question has been discussed at congresses both social and medical with a growing consensus of opinion that regulation as a system cannot last. Meanwhile it still continues in some form in most European countries, though Denmark, Norway, and all Switzerland except Geneva have done away with it. Some men, conscious of the failure of existing systems, suggest new plans for making regulation more strict and thorough, and therefore as they believe more efficacious. We have to remember that as the public becomes increasingly aware of the dangers and the prevalence of venereal disease, new attempts are sure to be made to introduce regulation in some form or other. It is important, therefore, to realise that regulation has been tried and is still being tried, but that there is no doubt of its failure to check disease. More than this, women cannot acquiesce in a system which tends to make out of an indefinite number of women a special class, under

a special police control, obliged to submit to a compulsory medical inspection. They will never consent to a system which punishes women for sins which it ignores in men. All Christian ideas of justice, the position which Christianity has asserted for women, the Christian teaching, to which the democratic ideal so closely corresponds, of the equal value of each human being, are alike opposed to such a system. We are not surprised to learn that it was among working-men that Josephine Butler found her first supporters. We can only regret that the Christian Church has till now done so little to convince the world that the existence of prostitution itself is utterly alien to the teaching and spirit of Christ, and that the Church did not take a foremost part in the campaign against regulation.

The work of the abolitionists, as those who oppose regulation are called, has been in the main destructive, and probably at the beginning anything but destructive work may have been impossible, so fierce was the opposition that had to be faced. Abolitionists have never been opposed in any sense to the treatment of the sufferers from disease,

but they did not regard it as their business to provide facilities for treatment. One of the unfortunate results of the controversy over regulation is that it diverted the attention of the public from the question of cure and from the consideration of how to provide treatment for these diseases in such a manner that it would be readily and freely used by the persons who needed it. The mind of the public has been curiously confused on the subject. The double standard and the consequent existence of the prostitute was accepted as inevitable, yet the diseases which were fostered by these accepted social conditions were treated as a disgrace, the shameful punishment of misconduct. Many of our hospitals have a special clause in their charters forbidding them to accept patients suffering from diseases brought about by their own misconduct. The few special hospitals, till now known as Lock Hospitals, which deal with these diseases have always found it exceptionally difficult to secure public support. The act which leads to the disease is condoned, even regarded as a necessity; the disease which follows on the act seems to have

been regarded by many at least as so shameful that the sufferers must be left to themselves. The sufferers themselves, ashamed of the results of their acts and anxious for concealment, are a ready prey to quacks and to widely advertised remedies promising a speedy cure. Disease is concealed as long as possible with the most serious results, since in these cases early treatment is of the utmost importance. Meanwhile as growing knowledge showed ever more clearly the far-reaching results of the diseases, those who advocated regulation have been ever ready to point out the harm that has been done by the abolitionists and to demand a return to regulation. Fortunately the wide study of the results of regulation, combined with the indefatigable research of pathologists into the nature and the treatment of the diseases, led, when the Royal Commission now sitting was appointed, to the insertion of a statement in the reference to the Commission that it was to be understood that "no return to the policy or provisions of the Contagious Diseases Acts of 1864, 1866, and 1869 is to be regarded as falling within the scope of

the inquiry.” The hope for the future does not lie in the return to old methods, but in the wise use of the new knowledge acquired not only from the scientific point of view by zealous and devoted research, but from the social point of view by the fact that the women’s movement has led women to think that this matter is their concern and that they must help the men who are fighting this great evil by bringing their own special contribution of thought and experience to bear on the whole matter. Dr. Bloch says that prostitution is “the question of questions,” that it will be the test and touchstone of the higher ethics of the future, as it is already the centre and kernel of the sex problem and the burning question of modern civilisation. He believes that the woman’s movement, which he regards as without precedent in human history, will give a decisive negative to the dogma that prostitution is a necessity. Further knowledge is needed by the great mass of women in order that they may realise for themselves and then teach the world what the existence of prostitution means for the social, moral, and physical health of the race.

CHAPTER VI

PRESENT ATTEMPTS TO FIGHT THE EVIL

THE appointment of the Royal Commission "to inquire into the prevalence of venereal diseases in the United Kingdom, their effects upon the health of the community, and the means by which these effects can be alleviated or prevented," is a clear proof that we have done with the conspiracy of silence on these matters. We are determined as a first step to gain accurate knowledge. This is not an easy matter, for, as has been already remarked, accurate statistics are not to be obtained at present. All statements made as to the number of those suffering from these diseases are inferences more or less ingenious drawn from the few cases in which any figures are available in the United Kingdom, or from comparisons with figures obtained in other countries with more or less accuracy. Some-

thing can be learned from these figures by those who know how to use them, and there is enough to show a most alarming prevalence of disease. At the same time some hopeful conclusions can be drawn from the absolutely trustworthy statistics which do exist as to the amount of disease in the army and navy. These figures show a steady decrease during the last few years, due not only to improved methods of treatment, but also to the care taken to secure wholesome recreation for the soldiers and sailors, to the instruction that is given them in the dangers of disease and in the possibility and desirability of leading a moral life, and to the example set them by their superior officers. On the whole, it would be true to say that at present statistics throw little light on the prevalence of disease and give little assistance as to the methods of combating it. The ways in which enlightening statistics may be obtained is occupying the attention of those who are investigating these questions, and present exceptional difficulties, since the shame attached to these diseases naturally leads to concealment whenever possible.

To most the discovery of better methods of treatment will seem of more importance in combating disease than any statistics, however accurate. The ordinary outsider has little idea of the patient and laborious work done in the investigation of disease and the search for curative measures by physicians and men of science. Their labours have been crowned during this century with a succession of discoveries which have introduced a new era in the treatment of venereal disease. The actual organism which causes syphilis, the *spirochæta pallida*, was discovered in 1905. A method of testing the blood, known as the Wasserman test, has been brought forward, which shows the existence of the spirochæte in the blood when no other signs would lead to the detection of syphilis. This test enables the existence of the syphilitic taint to be discovered in a new-born child, who can then be treated so that the later disastrous effects of the poison may be avoided. It is, of course, also of infinite use in many other ways in the discovery of latent disease and in demonstrating the connexion between syphilis and other maladies. The other

important discovery of recent years has been the new remedy found after long research by the German Dr. Ehrlich, and known first as 606 and now as Salvarsan. Extravagant hopes were aroused by this discovery because of the extraordinary rapid effect produced by the use of the drug. But the more cautious feared what has since proved to be the case, that these effects might not be lasting. Still salvarsan, which, as a strong preparation of arsenic, has to be used with the greatest care, has proved of immense value as an addition to the older methods of treatment by means of mercury. Science has done much to make cure possible, especially if the disease is attacked at the earliest possible stage, but in spite of these new discoveries and improved methods, though the period in which a syphilitic person is actively infective has been very much shortened by the use of salvarsan, the fact remains that a man cannot be considered free from the risk of passing on disease to his wife and children till some years, varying from two to five in medical opinion, after infection.

What science has made clear is that the

sooner an infected person submits himself to treatment the greater is the probability of cure. Therefore every effort should be made to provide facilities for cure in such a way that they will be readily and easily made use of. In this matter England has so far been very behindhand. Other countries such as Norway and Denmark, which have given up regulation, have made careful and extensive arrangements for the provision of treatment. In England since the repeal of the C.D. Acts in 1886 hardly anything has been done. The objection to providing treatment for these diseases because they are caused by moral misconduct is still very strong. The public authorities, whose business it is to take measures for the prevention and treatment of disease, have till now, as stated in an official report, made "no organised effort to diminish the prevalence of venereal disease." Existing hospital accommodation is utterly inadequate, and it is thought by some to be "unreasonable to expect subscribers to spend their money on rescuing persons from the consequences of their sins." Such a position can only be taken up by those who

have not had sufficient knowledge to think the matter out in all its bearings. To begin with, these diseases are not only disastrous to the individual afflicted, but are causes of much misery and disease to others. It is the obvious concern of the community to protect itself from them, and to do so it must take steps to cure the disease wherever found. Face to face with anyone suffering from illness of any kind our first duty is to cure him. Doctors and hospitals alike are bound to recognise that the cure of sickness, however caused, is their primary business. In the further question how to prevent it they are also intimately concerned, and in the case of venereal disease, as in the case of alcoholism, white lead poisoning, tuberculosis, and other diseases which can be clearly shown to be the result of our present social and moral conditions, they have to call in the aid of many other members of the community to assist them in the prevention of disease. But the effort to prevent does not diminish the anxiety to cure. The investigation of disease of all kinds again and again teaches us to recognise the solidarity of society. When

one member suffers other members are bound to suffer with him. We have to recognise that the adequate treatment of venereal disease is a national matter since it concerns the public health. There is imperative need for dealing with it on a national basis ; it cannot be left to voluntary effort. Free diagnosis, free treatment for all with no moral stigma attached in the administration of the treatment are essential parts of combating it from the point of view of the national health.

What can be done in the way of carefully organised and skilful treatment administered wisely and sympathetically is shown by the arrangements now in force in many places for soldiers and sailors, which have proved themselves already efficacious both for the cure and for the prevention of disease. The same possibilities should be within the reach of the civil population also. When doctors and public health authorities have done all that comes within their scope there will remain plenty to be done for the prevention of disease by the educationalist, the moral teacher, the social reformer, and by all who in any way help to form public

opinion. There need be no fear lest the provision of free facilities for treatment should lead to carelessness as to acquiring disease. The treatment itself, and the doctor's prohibition of marriage for several years, will be the best means of teaching the severity of the disease; and to those who submit to it, as any honourable and even any reasonably prudent man must, they will be a salutary means of discipline.

Instruction as to the nature and perils of these diseases should be given not only to those who come for treatment but to the public generally. How and when this instruction can be given is a matter of grave difficulty, and demands the most careful consideration from all those who are engaged in the training of the young. One thing is clear—no boy or young man should be allowed to go out into the world where he must be exposed to temptation unwarned of the risks which he runs. The girls who form the class from which the occasional prostitute is recruited, as well as the careless pleasure-seeking girls who frequent public-houses and places of amusements, should know that one fall, the result

of excitement or too much drink, may bring not only loss of character but loathsome disease. In the free, unrestrained life of our great cities, whose very existence is one of the chief causes of the spread of these diseases, the young people must know the dangers which surround them. Here lies a great responsibility for parents and teachers. Parents must not only warn their children, they should also feel bound to make such inquiries as may convince them that the man who wishes to marry their daughter is physically fit for marriage. At least one state in America has recently passed a law ordering that no marriage may take place unless medical certificates are presented stating that the parties concerned are free from venereal disease. But such a law is not likely ever to be accepted in England, and its observance must be practically impossible. Public opinion would never stand it. It is far better to aim at awakening a higher sense of responsibility on the part of those desiring to marry. We have to acknowledge the fact that no class of society is free from these dread diseases, and that without panic or exaggeration all have to

recognise the existence of a scourge which endangers the national health and threatens the national well-being, and that therefore all must combine in using every possible measure to fight it in a wise and sober but determined spirit.

CHAPTER VII

THE ONLY REAL CURE FOR THIS EVIL

THE more closely the causes and prevalence of venereal diseases are studied, the more clearly does the fact stand out that the real source of the evil is prostitution. The whole question of prostitution is outside the reference to the present Royal Commission, but it cannot remain outside the consideration of anyone who studies the question however slightly. It is a question which must deeply concern all those who are working for the regeneration of society. No words are needed to show how closely it concerns women. It is obvious that the cause of prostitution is the existence of the double moral standard. The more closely the whole matter is investigated the more certain does it appear that so long as prostitution exists venereal diseases will exist. Supposing that a perfect system of regula-

tion and a complete provision of methods of treatment could stamp it out in one country, it would be impossible to prevent its re-introduction by men who travel far and wide and through their manner of life acquire fresh infection from the women of other countries. Many years ago, speaking before the Medical Society of London, Dr. Gowers said of syphilis: "There remains the fact—old it is certain as the malady itself—that it can be prevented. One method, and one alone, is possible, is sure, and that one is open to all. It is the prevention and the safety that can be secured by unbroken chastity." We must fight disease, but behind disease, behind prostitution itself, lies the real enemy to be fought—the existence of the double moral standard which accepts unchastity for men as a necessity. For its existence women cannot plead to be guiltless. The respectable women, safe in their own sheltered existence, have not only for the most part in the past at least refused to concern themselves in any way for their fallen sisters and been content to assume that ignorance of evil was itself purity—they have openly disbelieved in

the possibility of chastity for men. The good women have thought that all that was needed was that they should not know what was done, the frivolous women have been ready to talk lightly of evil and to be amused and interested by scandal and the stories of the wild doings of men. Women for the most part have been just as ready in the past to accept the double moral standard as men. They must therefore share in the responsibility for its existence. Even now we know that many women still accept it as unavoidable though they may regret it, and many still refuse to think about the whole matter at all. If an equal moral standard is to be maintained it must be done by men and women acting together ; they must combine to get rid of the false ideas that prevail, they must together face the difficulties that are to be overcome.

There still remains in many people's minds the belief not only that chastity is impossible for men, but that it is harmful, a belief which used to be encouraged by some doctors. Fortunately we have at present the plain and outspoken testimony of many leading doctors that com-

plete chastity before marriage is not only possible but in every way to be desired. The greatest doctors, including Sir James Paget, Sir Andrew Clark, Sir George Humphry, and many others, have spoken strong and plain words to this effect. Dr. W. R. Gowers concluded the address from which I have already quoted by asking whether doctors, considering the power that their profession gave them, had done all they could to promote that perfect chastity which can alone with certainty prevent disease, and he adds, "With all the force that any knowledge I possess can give, and with any authority I may have, I assert—as the result of long observation and consideration of facts of every kind—that no man ever yet was in the slightest degree or way the better for incontinence; that for it every man must be worse morally, and that most are worse physically . . . and I am sure, further, that no man was ever yet anything but the better for perfect continence." By words such as these we are encouraged to go on hopefully in what must be a long and difficult struggle. We recognise gladly that it is not only a

woman's cause, that this is not a struggle in which women have to strive against men in order to maintain the honour of their sex, but a battle in which all right-thinking men will help and in which all will strive together to attain the highest good of the community.

It is imperative for women to try to discover what is really their part in this matter. Denouncing the weakness and wickedness of men, proclaiming the wrongs of women is not the way to bring about a better state of things. Women are called upon in these days to use their wider vision to help men, not to judge them. The men of the present generation are the inheritors of the low standard of the past; but if we read the past aright we shall, as Dr. Gowers puts it, "as we look back through the long centuries see the sensual more and more dominant in the past, growing less as the race slowly rises." We know that the closer we look the more we shall see the cruel wrongs that women suffered because the sensual was dominant, because brute force ruled. As we realise the conditions of the past we shall gain courage, for we shall dis-

cern the progress that has been made. We shall dare to hope that the awakening of women to a sense not only of their rights but of their responsibility for the common good will enable them to help to make the progress far quicker in the future than it has ever been in the past. Any knowledge of the social conditions of the past, of the conduct of armies in old days, of the licence that prevailed in ordinary society that we gain from past history and literature, will show us what the progress has been, and must lead to the conviction that since there has been so much improvement already, there is no need to accept the counsel of despair that as prostitution has always existed so it must always continue to exist. The women's movement in its deepest meaning is a movement to purify society by giving women their due place in society; it is with the help of women that prostitution must be destroyed, because they recognise that its existence is a wrong and disgrace to men as well as a wrong and disgrace to women.

Women must recognise that they too as a whole have hitherto acquiesced in prostitution, and that the nature of their relation-

ship to men and the social code that they have accepted has been largely to blame for the conditions that exist. From the days of babyhood the difference of sex is insisted upon. The baby girl is encouraged to be a coquette. Whether true or not, everyone is eager to assert that she early shows her preference for men. The little boy is encouraged to be domineering and self-assertive, because that is considered to be manly. The sex difference is constantly insisted upon. Right through all the different stages of child life the importance of the boy, the weakness of the girl is emphasized. The educational advantages are all for the boy; mother and sisters are expected to give in to him. When he comes home from school where his life has been full of incident and interest, the home life must be disorganised in order to provide him with pleasures and amusements. The holidays must be spent where he can get the kind of occupations and pleasures he prefers. Some may say that all this is changed now; certainly it is changing, but it continues to prevail to a very large extent. Still in the vast majority of cases the boy's

future is considered of far more importance than the girl's future, and so he is constantly encouraged to consider himself the lord of creation. The girl is still brought up to please, to desire to attract the opposite sex, often by appealing to their weakness. Many mothers still behave as if what they consider to be a good marriage were the one thing desirable for her, and still are willing to overlook many irregularities in the conduct of men if only they have position and wealth. Girls are not encouraged to prepare for regular work so that they may become independent, through fear lest this should diminish their chance of marriage. The leaders of society are ready to overlook much in the conduct of men: they do not make them feel that dissipated conduct will not be tolerated. Not that they should be expected to allow no room for repentance, rather they ought to exact repentance followed by a change of life, and refuse to receive or countenance men so long as they are living an irregular life. In the struggle for self-mastery which every man has to wage in a greater or less degree, he will be helped or hindered most

powerfully by the tone of the society in which he moves. If he feels, and it can be felt even without any direct words being used, that he is expected and trusted to keep straight, it will be an immense source of strength to him. We know the heroism with which our young soldiers, full of the joy of life, face death and hardship because that is what is expected of them. We know the awful discomfort, fatigue and privation endured by the gallant men who followed Captain Scott to the South Pole, and by others like them under similar circumstances. It is dishonouring to the manhood of England to believe that men who can do and suffer so much cannot also keep their bodies in temperance, soberness and chastity. To help them to do so they will need the grace of God, but they need also the strength that will come to them through the knowledge that this is what all those whom they love and respect and desire to please expect of them.

Do women help to make self-control easy to men when at the bidding of fashion they wear clothes of doubtful decency, when they go to theatres and music halls to

watch performances whose only charm lies in their being full of innuendo and suggestions of conduct which no decent society would tolerate, when they laugh at doubtful allusions and questionable jokes? To play the coquette, to try to attract by physical charms, may be very amusing to a girl, but it helps to bring the young man with whom she plays into the fire of temptation. That he is forced to keep within certain limits with the girl who leads him on in a drawing-room, does not make it easier for him to resist the temptation he may meet with from the girl in the streets, for whose condition no one has taught him to feel any responsibility. One girl has helped to stimulate the passions which another girl has to satisfy, but the one is protected and admired by society and the other is cast out and scorned. It is quite natural that women when they first learn of the degradation and ruin of other women, of the horrors of disease, when they see perhaps a young married friend suffering cruelly in her own health or in the loss of her hopes of motherhood through the sin of her husband, should be filled with indignation at

the wickedness of men. But they must remember that hitherto the majority of women have accepted that wickedness as necessary, and have failed to help men to conquer it. It is useless to condemn, to judge others. The only wise and hopeful way is to try to help them. Women have not hitherto done what they might to help in the hard struggle to purify society. The great hope of the future is that they are awakening to a sense of their responsibility in this matter. It is not a sheltered, protected home life, an innocent girlhood for the few that we desire to see, but the possibilities of true home life for all. We do not build our hopes on the innocence of ignorance, but on the moral strength, on the fine independence, on the clear vision of the girl who knowing the dangers that surround young life keeps herself pure. By her free and wholesome companionship in work and play with men she is able to show them what is the part that women are called upon to play in the world, and to give them a new conception of what their relations with women may be.

CHAPTER VIII

WHAT WE CAN DO NOW

To raise the moral tone, to bring about the acceptance of an equal moral standard for men and women must be a long and slow work. Our courage, our hope, our enthusiasm in the cause must not fail us on that account. Meanwhile we are learning the terrible ravages of disease, and finding out how the children suffer from the sins of their fathers, how the nation suffers in the loss of its children and in the expense entailed upon it by the care of those physically and mentally ruined through disease. What can we do now to check these evils?

We need in the first place to do everything in our power to provide for all who are suffering from venereal diseases possibilities of treatment in accordance with the best modern methods. What is being done in some cases for soldiers and sailors must be

done for others also. This treatment must be provided free, and the community must be prepared to pay for it. The most approved modern methods both of diagnosis and treatment are very expensive and quite out of the reach of any but the well-to-do, but they should be available for all at the public cost. Treatment must also be provided in such places and at such hours as will make it easy for people to attend. It must be provided in such a way that no stigma is attached to those who seek it. At the same time means must be taken by printed papers or otherwise to instruct all those who come for treatment in the seriousness of the disease from which they are suffering and in their plain duty to avoid any risk of infecting others. How this treatment is to be provided and how it is to be paid for will need much consideration and much careful organisation ; but all those who serve on Boards of Guardians, Hospital Committees of Management, Insurance Committees, or any other bodies concerned with public health should use their influence to see that something is done in this direction as soon as possible. It will mean considerable expense now, but

it will lead to immense saving in the future, for it will tend largely to diminish the number of inmates in our lunatic and idiot asylums, in hospitals and workhouses, as well as the number of the blind and deaf, and of those hopelessly incapacitated for work through disease.

The treatment provided must be free in every sense of the word. In their first realisation of the dread effects of these diseases many are inclined to urge that like other infectious diseases they should be made notifiable, and that persons suffering from them should be compulsorily detained so long as they are in an infectious condition. But compulsory notification and detention alike would tend to prevent the great object in view, that of getting persons to present themselves for cure at the earliest possible moment. These diseases are both most infectious and most amenable to treatment in the very earliest stages. The risk of their condition becoming known by means of notification or the fear of detention would keep persons from going at once to the approved places for treatment or from seeking the advice of medical men, and would encour-

age the resort to quacks and the use of advertised remedies, already so largely practised, so disastrous in result, and so fatal to any hope of really checking disease. Confidential notification, which is advocated by some, would only be useful for statistical purposes, and could not be used as a means of enforcing treatment unless the names of those notified were divulged. Only the certainty of secrecy will make people willing to come for advice before they are driven to do so by the severity of their sufferings. Compulsory detention would work in the same way. Here persuasion, instruction and warning must be resorted to in order to get patients to submit to detention for the necessary time. The value of any organisation for the provision of treatment must be judged by the likelihood of its attracting persons to come promptly and readily to avail themselves of it.

It is often urged that in all cases where a wife is found to be suffering from disease owing to infection by her husband it is the doctor's duty to tell her what she is suffering from and how she acquired her malady. It is obviously the doctor's duty to warn

the husband and to persuade him to submit to treatment. He should also investigate the family history and see that everything possible is done to prevent the children suffering from the consequences of disease. But there may be cases in which a wise doctor will see that for the whole truth to be known by the wife would destroy the happiness of the home, and when he may feel that the best he can do is to try to avert all future evil consequences and leave the wife in ignorance. In this as in other cases some discretion must be allowed to the doctor. It is probable that as the general public learns more about these matters, it will become increasingly difficult for a wife under such circumstances to remain in ignorance. In the case of a man who insists upon marrying when his doctor has told him that it is not safe for him to do so, it would be desirable that some change in the law of libel should leave the doctor free to inform his future wife or her parents of his condition without incurring any risk of legal proceedings.

As ignorance of the serious nature of these diseases and of their consequences is

one of the reasons that so little has been done to check them, further knowledge on this subject on the part of the whole public is imperatively necessary. The only difficulty is to decide how and when this information should be given. But though the whole matter is beset with difficulty some things are clear. The public should be convinced of the necessity for increasing scientific knowledge on the subject, and should be ready to bear the expense necessitated by the work of scientific research. The doctors cannot help the public unless they are supplied with the means of acquiring knowledge. Laboratories and investigators must be provided and the pathologists given every opportunity for the pursuit of their beneficent labours. Again, those who have the training of boys and girls must give themselves to studying how best they can prepare them to meet the temptations and dangers which come to them through their body. This is a matter of great delicacy and great difficulty. Time, experience and observation are needed to find out the best methods. We have awakened to the evil results which may follow on too much

reserve, we have to beware that we do not rush into the other extreme. For most people the wisest and the safest plan is to concern themselves as little as possible with the things of the body. We have to free ourselves from the sensual that we may rise to the spiritual. This does not mean that we have to ignore the beauty or the glory of the body, itself the home of the spirit, and in our present condition the means also by which the spirit finds expression. But the sensual desires, the flesh, are what have to be kept in subjection, and to do this the wisest plan is to think about them and speak about them as little as possible. The sense of shame attaching to some of the functions of the body was given us as a protection, and it cannot be discarded without serious loss and danger. When speech is necessary let it be frank and true and simple, but on these subjects let there be as little of it as possible.

It is a mistake to leave children and young people in ignorance of the functions of the body and of the laws of reproduction; for ignorance arouses curiosity, and curiosity leads to much more unwholesome thought

on these matters than simple information wisely and frankly given could possibly occasion. Probably, when the right time comes, the wisest plan is to give instruction on the bodily functions and on the danger of disease not isolated from other teaching, but as part of general instruction in botany and natural science, and in hygiene and the general care of the body. This is a subject to which parents and educationalists are beginning to give serious attention. The right course to pursue must vary under different circumstances and with different persons. Children are infinitely different, and no general rules can be prescribed for enlightening them.

When young men and young women go out into life is the moment when the clearest and strongest warnings should be given them of the risks they run. There is much immorality in country villages, but prostitution belongs to cities, and the temptations of city life are very different from those met with in the country. A boy or girl may be helped by public opinion, by the presence of those who know them in a small place, but the independence and

loneliness of city life expose them to quite new temptations. Boy and girl alike are often absolutely ignorant of the danger of venereal infection. Our hospitals can tell sad tales of young men and young women hopelessly diseased for life by one fall. Means should be provided for giving all some instruction and warning. But we must not trust too much to such warning, though we are bound to see that it is given. We must go further and see that wholesome recreation, possible conditions of work, further opportunities for education are provided for our young people, boys and girls alike, as well as places where they can meet one another for that intercourse which is so good and so necessary for them. Idleness, empty minds, want of interest in life, monotonous work in ill-ventilated rooms, all these and other conditions like them prepare the way for temptation.

But instruction in the facts of life and knowledge of the horrors of disease will not give self-control, and if we trust to teaching of this sort to do wonders, we shall be grievously disappointed. The foundation of all true education is the training of character,

and for that the training of the will is all-important. From the earliest days the child can be taught the lesson which will save him as a man in times of temptation, that he must make his will strong to control his desires and to help him to do the difficult thing. But the further lesson must be taught too that if he seeks to gain that self-mastery in his own strength alone, he may find it fail him in the hour of temptation, whilst if he learns to seek the Grace of God and to trust in His strength that will never fail him.

The girl as well as the boy needs wholesome recreation, and still more even than the boy she needs improved conditions of work. Her fall is not often due to actual want, but the majority of prostitutes are recruited from the ranks of those who live in the region of economic pressure, whose earnings are insufficient not only to supply them with any of the amusements naturally desired by the young, but even with sufficient food. The little maid of all work, the sweated worker, the large number of women engaged in seasonal trades always on the verge of want, if not in actual want, are

all alike in a position of constant temptation. All honour to them that so many stand firm. But we have to remember that one fall may mean ruin to them, that in proportion as a man is unscrupulous and wide awake enough to know the risks he may run, he will be keen in his pursuit of the innocent and the unwary. The independence of the girls in our great cities under modern conditions makes it imperative that they should know something of the dangers that surround them. We have to help them to learn how to use their independence wisely. But if we teach them about the dangers that they may run, let us be careful that our teaching does not arouse in them a spirit of panic, or that kind of nervous fear which goes out to meet dangers, or the hysteria which imagines them. Neither in urging them to be wary and cautious let us breed in them a spirit of universal distrust and suspicion. The great necessity is that girls should learn how to take care of themselves and how to teach others to respect them. The very way in which a girl walks in the streets may be a protection or a danger to her. But

we must never forget the dangers inherent in the existing unsatisfactory conditions of girl labour, nor rest content till they are improved. It is truly said by Dr. Abraham Flexner that "every effort in social and economic reform, education and sanitation has tended to reduce the number of prostitutes, and to strengthen the resistance of those exposed to danger."

It is impossible not to recognise how closely this whole question is bound up with the position of women, and therefore it is natural that those who feel most strongly for the sufferings of women and children brought about by disease should be urgent in their demand for women's suffrage. It will be well to consider the ways in which the granting of the suffrage to women would help. First by the recognition of their full citizenship it would inevitably though it may be slowly do away with the idea that women exist for the pleasure and the use of men. That idea, the result of the rule of brute force, has led to the degradation of women, to the sheltering of some women at the expense of others. The emancipation of women will mean as

it is worked out with increasing fullness, that men and women will learn to work together as companions, each bringing their contribution for the good of all. What full and equal companionship may mean can be seen in the perfect married life. We have to wait to see what it will do for the common good in the life of the State. But the method in which women work for their enfranchisement, and the attitude they adopt to men in their struggle, may do much to hinder in the near future the realisation of the fruits of that companionship in work in all the varied activities of life. Women must not work as if they were seeking to gain their rights for their own benefit; they must seek enfranchisement that they may be able to work side by side with men for the regeneration of society. If the sense of past wrongs or present hindrances embitters them in their struggle, victory will lose much of its promise of good for men and women alike.

The enfranchisement of women will, it is hoped, lead to greater attention being given to many matters affecting our social conditions, and to the remedying of many of the

evils which help to encourage prostitution and as a consequence the diseases which follow it. Legislation can do something. It may do much to improve housing and the conditions of women's labour, to regulate the drink traffic, to introduce necessary reforms in the criminal law for the due punishment of offences against women and children, and for the suppression of those who grow rich by supplying the vicious needs of others. But we shall be wrong if we trust too much to legislation. Even in this terrible business of the white slave traffic, when the profits to be made are so large, the men and women who grow rich through them will employ their ingenuity to find ever new ways of evading the law. All that we can hope is that the law may make their hideous trade increasingly difficult. Legislation may call attention to crime, it may secure the punishment of some offenders, it may make crime more difficult, but it can never go to the root of things. Women will make a grievous mistake if they trust too much to legislation to improve morals, and if when they do gain political power they try

to enforce laws which public opinion has not endorsed. They may by trusting too much to legislation make the same mistake as men made when they looked to regulation as a means of getting rid of venereal disease. Women's influence on public opinion is even more needed than women's influence on legislation in these matters. Women's suffrage will chiefly help because by its assertion of their full citizenship it will increase their influence on public opinion and deepen their own sense of responsibility for public opinion.

Though the suffrage will, I believe, greatly increase the influence of women, there is no need to wait for it in order that they should do all in their power to raise the moral standard. The agitation for the suffrage if rightly conducted should itself help mightily. But as women begin to take part in public affairs, to handle difficult subjects and to discuss on public bodies or elsewhere with men questions about which a short while ago it was not thought proper for them even to know, their whole tone and way of treating these subjects will be of vital importance. If it is a mis-

take to be afraid to speak out frankly when it is needed, it is an equal mistake to speak with unnecessary frankness and frequency on subjects which are best left alone. Reserve has its great value, and if its value is recognised, men and women will find that the presence of the opposite sex when delicate matters have to be touched upon, whilst putting no hindrance in the way of such frankness as is necessary, will prevent useless or unseemly talk and the habit of enlarging upon unpleasant subjects and telling doubtful or gruesome anecdotes which is sometimes indulged in both by companies of men or of women alone.

It is well that women have determined to know the sores of our social system and no longer ask to be shielded from knowledge however painful it may be. But they need to remember that so long as we are in the flesh, subjects concerning the flesh have their own particular perils, and even an unwholesome attraction of their own. Those who want to work for purity must be careful about the purity of their own souls. There is some truth in the old idea that the very ignorance of evil possessed by

a good woman had a purifying effect upon the men who came in contact with her. We must beware lest unashamed assertion and use of knowledge, lest speech which has lost all reserve destroy the power, which women should wish to preserve, of making an atmosphere of purity. When knowledge takes the place of ignorance and frank speaking the place of silence, it will be the way in which women use their knowledge, the way in which they touch subjects on which formerly they were silent that will make for purity. To do this, to have an unconscious influence on the men with whom they come in contact, they must keep their own thoughts pure. In the claim to know everything, to be free to speak about everything, to go everywhere, to read everything, to go to every doubtful play and discuss it freely afterwards, women may often produce such confusion in their own minds that their own vision of what is right may grow obscure and their power to help others to see straight and think clean thoughts may be lost.

CHAPTER IX

THE GROUNDS OF HOPE

As we learn something of the sin and evil in the world and the misery and disease that follow in its track, it is difficult at first not to be overwhelmed with horror and despair. But women must bring a new spirit of hope into the long struggle against social evils. To dwell on the evil till we learn to disbelieve in the good will make us useless in the struggle. We believe in human nature, we believe in the goodness of men more than they are willing to believe in it themselves, we are not going to accept as a fact that as prostitution has always existed so it must always continue to exist. As we read the past we see abundant reason for hope, for we see the progress that has been made in the long slow struggle to make the dominion of the spirit take the place of the rule of brute force. Even in the lifetime of many of us changes have been seen which must fill us with thankfulness. Mr. W. A. Coote, whose knowledge

on these subjects is unrivalled, says, "I knew the Haymarket and Piccadilly very well forty-seven years ago, and I say that London to-day, compared with what it was forty years ago, is an open-air cathedral." We have hundreds of women at work to-day to rescue their fallen sisters, and fifty years ago hardly anyone troubled about them. But it is by going back to the days when the ideals of chivalry prevailed that we see best how great has been the change since the time when the exaltation of a few women on to pinnacles to be adored meant the misery and degradation of the great mass. And yet though we can easily see even by a very little study of social conditions the progress that has been made, we know that we are only at the very beginning of the fight for social purity, for we are only just learning that it is a fight which must be undertaken by men and women together. It is a fight in which the Church has never really taken its full share. Its teaching of asceticism, of flight from the world for those who wished to keep themselves pure, may have been necessary in the Middle Ages, but for later days it only confused the issues. Women, who form so large a part of the

Church, must enlist the Church actively in the fight against prostitution; for it is only religion that will convince us that God has given to no man license to sin. And it is only faith in God that can give the assurance of victory in the fight against sin.

Let us join in this great struggle in a spirit of hope, and not in a spirit of despair or indignation against anything but evil. We want to bring light into the dark places, and life to those who have lost all faith in better things. To do so we must come in the spirit of hope, believing that the good must prevail. It is a great call, it is a great opportunity. Are we worthy of it? Can we respond? In all humility and in a teachable spirit, trusting in a power not our own, let us try to fit ourselves for the task that lies before us. We can only begin it, but let us see that we hand it on to others not made more difficult by our mistakes but illumined by the wealth of our experience and the radiance of our hope.

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